

Article received on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
UDC 78.091.4(497.7):781.7

Selena Rakočević

***MUSIC AND DANCE OF SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE***  
***First symposium of the International Council for Traditional Music Study Group***  
**Struga, FYR Macedonia, 4–8 September 2008**

The idea of establishing a study group in which ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists of Balkan countries could gather for an immediate exchange of professional interests, and to organize ongoing meetings and realization of joint projects, first appeared at the international symposium ‘Urban Music of the Balkans’, held in Durres, Albania, in October 2006. This plan, not long after the aforementioned conference, resulted in a panel discussion entitled ‘History and Perspectives of National Ethnomusicologies and Ethnochoreologies in the Balkans’, presented in Vienna in July 2007, at the 39<sup>th</sup> Conference of International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). Within this panel, ten scientists from five Balkan countries (FYR Macedonia, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece and Serbia) presented their works. Only two months later, at the symposium entitled ‘The Balkan Peninsula as a Musical Crossroad’, held in Struga, FYR Macedonia, immediate steps were taken to institutionalize the new society. It was decided that it should be a part of ICTM, under the name Study Group for Music and Dance of South-Eastern Europe. This initiative was supported by a member of ICTM Executive Board, Svanibor Pettan, and approved at the Board’s regular session in the beginning of 2008.

Forty-two ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists, not only from South-East European countries but from the USA, UK, Slovenia, Germany and Austria as well, took part in the newly founded group’s first symposium, held in Struga from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2008. In parallel sessions, they were joined by musicologists, mainly from FYR Macedonia, but also from Serbia, UK and Slovenia. The symposium study session began by introducing this year’s guest of honour, UCLA professor Elsie Dunin, and reviewing her decades-long enthusiastic activities in ethnochoreology, more specifically in historical ethnography of dance in certain areas of South-Eastern Europe and South America.

All three subjects of this year’s conference dealt with current issues concerning the role of traditional song and dance in times of transition, which mark contemporary history in most of South-East European countries. The greatest number of papers were presented within the ‘Tradition – Transition – Revival’ subject, somewhat fewer within ‘Governmental Policies, Patronage and Censorship’, and but a handful of texts considered the role of media in South-East European countries, which was covered by the third, very broad subject: ‘Media’.

Among all the works presented, the most controversial papers were those dealing with political control, not only in traditional music and dance, but in culture generally. Out of those, the well-presented report of ethnochoreologist Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin deserves mention, in which he spoke about the particulars of repressing traditional music and dance in favour of forceful promotion of Western European

music, a tactic that was deliberately executed throughout Turkey in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The immediate consequence of such repressive Atatürk's politics in the region of Bergama, where Özbilgin conducted his research, was a change in the traditional instruments, including the use of wind instruments (primarily trumpet and clarinet), which further led to the expansion of brass bands and a change in the dance repertoire, hence the change in the traditional dance styles in this area.

Svanibor Pettan, Ana Hofman, Naila Ceribašić, Ganka Cvetanova and Ivona Opetčeska-Tatarčeska considered the ideological level of particular forms of traditional music and dance in Southern Slavonic countries. While Pettan and Opetčeska-Tatarčeska focused on the socialist period of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the centralized promotion of nationalist ideas within certain former Yugoslav republics, Ana Hofman discussed the significance of making music within cultural clubs, which is, in the latest post-socialist period in Serbia, rapidly changing for the promoters of the practice themselves. The distinctive trait of this extraordinary methodological procedure, which is one of the most current trends in contemporary ethnomusicology, is that during the research, but especially during the presentation of the research results, the informers – or tellers, according to the term established in classical ethnomusicological field research – become equal with the researcher personally, and thus are named 'interlocators'. The point of such an approach is to consider traditional musical practice from a theoretical standpoint, but also to present it from the performer's perspective.

Naila Ceribašić and Ganka Cvetanova also drew attention to current developments. They discussed the realization of various projects regarding promotion and preservation of traditional music, as well as dominant tendencies in cultural politics in Croatia and FYR Macedonia. Unlike them, historiographically-oriented Arzu Öztürkmen pondered global processes of cultural politics in Turkey since the beginning of last century until today.

Most papers in this conference, however, presented case studies which illustrated possible re-interpretations of the function, structure and form of traditional music and dance of Balkans and South-Eastern Europe, depending on contextual changes in their performing. Amongst them, these should be mentioned: a historiographic review of the development of the *kanto* genre in Turkey during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, presented by Berna Özbilen; a comparison between *hora* and *karşılama* dances in the Edirne region in Turkey, presented by Ferruh Ozdincer; a synthetic review of the expansion of different forms of *aksak* rhythm in Serbia and the surrounding countries, presented by Nice Fracile; pointing out the influence of important individuals to repertoire policy and performance style of cultural clubs in Croatia (Iva Niemčić) and Serbia (Selena Rakočević); and the study of current practices of performing traditional village dances in sports arenas of major Bulgarian cities, by Daniela Ivanova. Special attention was provoked by the reports on how Balkan music is perceived in Vienna, by Ursula Hemetek, then in Slovenia, by Mojca Kovačič, and finally in certain Western European countries, by Elka Tschernokoschewa.

Although much fewer in number, the papers dealing with the role of media in the presentation of traditional music were very interesting. The following should be mentioned: Susanne Ziegler and Branka

Kostić-Marković discussed several projects of media presentation (Ziegler), and also possible manners of using field recordings of traditional music (Kostić-Marković); Ventsislav Dimov pointed out the complex role of Roma musicians in the media promotion of so-called ethnofolk in Bulgaria after 1989; and Olivera Vasić considered one of the ways to ‘reinvent the tradition’, using the examples of film and theatre interpretations of a North-Eastern Serbian folkway named ‘padalice’.

Because of the large number of participants, the study session of the four-day symposium was very taxing. A Byzantine chant concert by the *Joan Harnosin* male choir, held in a nearby church, the performance of Roma belly dancers from various regions of FYR Macedonia, and also the inevitable ‘Balkan’ socializing in the evening hours, made the schedule more attractive and pleasant for all the participants.

The first conference of the newly founded ICTM Study Group will go on record as the beginning of the organized and hopefully fruit-bearing cooperation between ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists dealing with the same cultural-historical area. On the other hand, the establishment of the Study Group for Music and Dance of South-Eastern Europe and its first symposium in Struga are extremely important as a turning point in the histories and methodological-theoretical developments of national ethnomusicologies and ethnochoreologies of the region.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović